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OCEANIA

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF AUSTRALIA, NEW GUINEA AND THE ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN

VOLUME III

1932 - 1933

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TRIBAL ORGANIZATION IN EASTERN ARNHEM LAND

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131 THE aboriginal peoples referred to in this paper are those occupying the country to the north-east of a line running roughly from Cape Stewart on the north coast of Arnhem Land to Blue Mud Bay in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and extending to the sea coast and the adjacent islands. The social organization of these peoples is marked 621 by a very pronounced emphasis on the importance of the horde, each of which exists as an almost entirely independent unit. These hordes are very numerous; some of them are very small, and there is definite evidence that several of them have actually become extinct, at least in so far as their patrilineal descent as a separate unit is concerned. With the few exceptions mentioned below, each of [197] these hordes, no matter how small, has its own particular dialect. In many cases the dialectal difference is small, and in at least one instance would appear to be consciously artificial.

621 The two moieties into which the aboriginal society is divided are known as Yiritcha and Dua respectively, and these names are 616 used without variation throughout the area indicated. Each horde is exclusively Yiritcha or Dua, as the case may be, and every man [582] obtains his wife from some other horde of the opposite moiety.

621 The two moieties are divided into eight subsections, four Yiritcha and four Dua, and the prevailing form of totemism includes 616 the definite relationship of all members, both male and female, of 617 each subsection (*marlk*), with some particular bird or animal, which is known by the individual as his or her *dzuŋoin*. These *dzuŋoin* have, as far as I am able to discover, no association with totem centres. Every member of the same subsection possesses the same *dzuŋoin*, irrespective of the horde to which he belongs.

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The eight subsections, with their totems, are as follows:

Subsections.		Totems.
Male (Yiritcha)	Female	
Ngarit	Ngaritjan	*kurrɾumbul gorowarau*[1] (slender-limbed kangaroo).
Bulain	Bulaindjan	*kurrɾumbul borumgor* (stout-limbed kangaroo).
Kaijark	Koitjan	*karrkain* (fork-tailed kite).
		kurritorrk (large black lizard).
		jiriwi-jiriwi (wagtail).
Bangardi	Bangaritjan	*urrpan* (emu).
(Dua)		
Buralang	Kalian	*werrti* (agile wallaby).
		dzandil (smaller wallaby).
Balang	Bilindjan	*damala* (white-breasted sea-eagle).
Kamarung	Kumandjan	*karmarug* (wedge-tailed eagle).
Warmut	Warmutjan	*warmut* (black-breasted buzzard).
		dulaku (black-nosed kangaroo).

The moieties are determined by patrilineal descent, but the subsections by matrilineal descent.

The regular system of marriage between the subsections, with the subsections of the offspring, is as follows:—

Yiritcha man.	Dua woman.	Yiritcha children. Male.	Yiritcha children. Female.
Ngarit	Bilindjan	Bangardi	Bangaritjan
	Kalian	Kaijark	Koitjan
Bulain	Kalian	Kaijark	Koitjan
	Bilindjan	Bangardi	Bangaritjan
Kaijark	Warmutjan	Ngarit	Ngaritjan
	Kumandjan	Bulain	Bulaindjan
Bangardi	Kumandjan	Bulain	Bulaindjan
	Warmutjan	Ngarit	Ngaritdjan

Dua man.	Yiritcha woman.	Dua children. Male.	Dua children. Female.
Buralang	Bulaindjan	Warmut	Warmutjan
	Ngaritjan	Karmarung	Kumandjan
Balang	Ngaritjan	Karmarung	Kumandjan
	Bulaindjan	Warmut	Warmutjan
Karmarung	Bangaritjan	Buralang	Kalian
	Koitjan	Balang	Bilindjan
Warmut	Koitjan	Balang	Bilindjan
	Bangaritjan	Buralang	Kalian

[1] Rolled *r* is indicated by *rr*.

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582 616 It will be seen from the above that though eight subsections are recognized, these operate in four pairs, so reducing the organization in this respect to a four-section system. It should be noticed, however, that normally a man marries a woman of the first-named subsection in the above, *i.e.*, a Ngarit man regularly marries a Bilindjan woman, but under certain circumstances may marry a Kalian woman. A Buralang man regularly marries a Bulaindjan woman, but may marry a Ngaritjan woman, and so on.

778 The chief ceremonial object is called *muraian*, and each horde possesses a number. These are, in the vast majority of cases, representations of (*a*) utensils, such as digging sticks (*bartfu*), dilly-bags (*batti*), clubs (*balata*), *etc.*, supposed to have been used by mythological ancestors; (*b*) natural species associated in legend with these ancestors; (*c*) these mythological ancestors themselves or certain of their physical organs. These *muraian* would, I suppose, be termed ceremonial totems, though it seems an abuse of the term so to apply it. *Muraian* is the common " outside " name for these objects, while the ceremonial or " inside " name is *rayga*. *Muraian* is, on rare occasions, used to indicate anything sacred or tabu, but correctly the term applies only to these particular objects, the general term for sacred being *yarin*. Thus the *muraian* or *rayga* is *yarin*.

796 621 778 The ceremonies associated with these *rayga* are known as *nara*,[3] but while there is found an ill-defined system of local totem centres the *nara* ceremonies are performed at any suitable place, quite frequently in the territory of another horde many miles from the totem centre to which it belongs. Not infrequently both Yiritcha and Dua hordes will unite for a *nara* ceremony, *rayga* of both moieties being used.

778 621 614 It is upon these *rayga* that the only real cohesion between the various hordes is based. Certain hordes of the same moiety, though as widely separated as Elcho Island on the north coast and Blue Mud Bay on the Gulf of Carpentaria, possess the same *rayga*, and these are regarded as belonging to the same *mala*. I leave it to be

[3] It should be noted that the *nara* ceremonies are in no sense increase rites, which are unknown in this region.

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determined whether the term tribe, sub-tribe, or some other should be applied to these *mala*.

The horde is usually referred to by the name of the dialect spoken by the members. The name of the *mala* is much less frequently used.

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Below is a list, as complete as present information allows, of the hordes in this area, and the *mala* into which they are grouped. I have used a letter to indicate the *mala*, and the same letter with an accompanying figure to indicate the hordes included in the *mala*. The letter and figure associated are set down on the accompanying chart to indicate the location of the various hordes.

(A) Kalvanuk *mala* (Dua).
A.1. Liakalauomirr.
A.2. Mundalpi.
A.3. Barrarrngor.

(B) Biringal *mala* (Yiritcha).
B.1. Ritarrngor.
B.2. Malarbarrtcharai.
B.3. Buranadjini.
B.4. Kulungngor.
B.5. Mararrpa.

(C) Ding-ding *mala* (Dua).
C.1. Liakauarmirr.
C.2. Guyula.
C.3. Ngaladarr.
C.4. Mun-nerrngor.
C.5. Djarrwarrk.
C.6. Lulmarango.

(D) Munjakai *mala* (Yiritcha).
D.1. Won-guri.
D.2. Kwiyamil.
D.3. Worlkara.
D.4. Wolamangu.
D.5. Giki.
D.6. Kwiyamil.

(E) Berrkali *mala* (Yiritcha).
E.1. Kopapingo.
E.2. Daiorrorr.
E.3. Kopapingo.
E.4. Mukarrganalmiri.
E.5. Yitua.
E.6. Maratanggimiri.
E.7. Dalwongor.

(F) Jiring *mala* (Dua).
F.1. Djumbarpingo.
F.2. Durili.
F.3. Djarn.
F.4. Barlamomo.
F.5. Darmaramiri.

(G) Murngin *mala* (Yiritcha).
G.1. Warumari.
G.2. Korlpa.
G.3. Pural-pural.
G.4. Kumait.
G.5. Lamumiri.
G.6. Burata.

(H) Kauorr *mala* (Dua).
H.1. Karlpu.
H.2. Woralul.
H.3. Reraitchingu.

(I) Murungun *mala* (Dua).
I.1. Yarrnangu.
I.2. Yarrnangu.
I.3. Yarrnangu.
I.4. Kumalungga.
I.5. Malara.

(J) Wurambirrpirr *mala* (Yiritcha).
J.1. Balmaui.
J.2. Obulkara.
J.3. Kopapingo.

(K) Kukauurrta *mala* (Yiritcha).
K.1. Gunalbingo.

(L) Murangarrpiara *mala* (Dua).
L.1. Djinba.

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It will be observed that two Kopapingo hordes are included in the Berrkali *mala*. These two hordes, though widely separated in location, speak the same dialect, and so are called by the same name. A Kopapingo horde is also found in the Wurambirrpirr *mala*. This horde speaks the Kopapingo dialect, but possesses the *muraian* of the Wurambirrpirr *mala*, and not those of the Barrkali *mala*. My informants were very definite that this horde therefore belonged to the former *mala*.

In the Murungun *mala* the first three hordes, though widely separated, speak the same dialect and so are called by the same name. In the case of the Kukau-urrta and Murangarrpiara it would appear that the horde is co-extensive with the *mala*. Though these *mala* are both small, it may be that in each case there are more than one horde which speak the same dialect and adjoin each other in location.

A number of the hordes have, in addition to the dialect name, a local community name also, *e.g.*, Malau-ulmurrk is the local name of the Lamumiri-speaking horde of the Murngin *mala*. As these local names are rarely if ever used by a man when speaking of his own horde, closer investigation over the whole area may reveal that they are possessed by all the hordes.

Though I have been resident among these people for the past six years I have failed to discover any name which is applied to any combination of hordes of both moieties. Neither have I discovered a name for the language of which the various tongues spoken are dialects. Kopapingo is sometimes used for the various Yiritcha dialects and Jumbarpingo in the same way for the Dua dialects.

As will be gathered, I disagree with Dr. W. Lloyd Warner in his application of the name Murngin generally to the hordes of both moieties (*Oceania*, 1, 251, 331 and 457; also *American Anthropologist*, n.s. XXXII, 207; XXXIII, 172). As I have shown, the Murngin is purely a Yiritcha *mala*. All my informants are most emphatic that no Dua man could possibly belong to the Murngin group. It is but one of several Yiritcha and Dua *mala*, the hordes of which are scattered over the same area. I therefore consider Dr. Warner's use of the name to be unfortunate and misleading.

If a tribe is to be defined as a number of neighbouring hordes which are united by the possession of a homogeneity of language

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and custom, then it appears that all the people of the area indicated belong to the one tribe, which for the time being must remain nameless.[4]

The widely separated locations of the hordes of the same *mala* present a puzzling problem. Probably migration, at least in part, accounts for it. An example of this is found in the Daiorrorr horde of the Berrkali *mala*, which within the lifetime of its present members migrated from the south of Buckingham Bay to its present location on the Goyder River. Possibly some evidence of migration is also found in the legends of the people, including the hordes along the northern coast and the islands adjacent thereto. In these legends a very large proportion of the mythological ancestors whose exploits they relate are represented as having lived and laboured and instituted the customs of the people in the neighbourhood of Caledon and Blue Mud Bays. In some cases these ancestors are represented as starting in at that point and travelling right across the country in a north-westerly direction to the opposite coast. These same legends, with local variations, are apparently found throughout the whole area, and the social organization and the customs of the people are of the one type.

T. THEODOR WEBB

Map of North-East Arnhem Land showing approximate location of aboriginal hordes.

[4]The peoples to the west of the line indicated differ from those referred to in both language and social organization.